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ABSTRACT

The services of the National Reading Center are discussed from the point of view of its efforts to encourage literacy campaigns in business, industry, in health, welfare and correctional institutions, and in a wide range of voluntary and community organizations. An introduction to the work of Literacy Volunteers, Inc. (LitVol), is presented; this introduction is the first in a series on major partners in the national Right to Read effort. LitVol organizes and trains volunteers to teach reading on a one-to-one tutoring basic to functionally illiterate adults (those with less than fifth grade skills). Among the methods developed by LitVol are: heavy use of voluntary staff; organized recruitment plans for trainers and learners, aided by TV spots and other publicity materials; tutor training, using handbooks on organizing and instructional techniques, including audio-visual components; and methods for "matching" tutors and learners by personality and components. Advantages of one-to-one tutoring include: (1) Illiterate adults have often been frustrated in classrooms and generalize this experience to any group situation; (2) It is difficult to find a group, or even two adults at the same level, who, studying together, can learn at the same pace; (3) Personal tutoring can fit the instruction to the varying motives of the adult learner; and (4) Personal attention can often buck up the morale of the troubled learner. (CK)

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NATIONAL READING CENTER

1776 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
202 833 3300

ADULT READING DEVELOPMENT

AN INFORMATION AWARENESS SERVICE

Current Awareness Service for Workers in Adult Reading Programs

If, by 1980, 90% of Americans, aged 17 and over, are to read well enough to contribute fully to the post-industrial society of the future, all institutions of American life must be mobilized in an adult literacy campaign, reinforcing and extending the adult basic education work now being carried out by the school systems. The National Reading Center will work in many ways to encourage these efforts in business and industry, in health, welfare and correctional institutions, and in a wide range of voluntary and community organizations.

This is the first of a service, ADULT READING DEVELOPMENT, which we hope will build into a continuous flow of useful information to workers active in the reading training of adults and out-of-school youth. Its purpose is to encourage your use of information in the many reports, journal articles and other sources, on what we are learning about this work from experience, from research and development projects, and from the successful programs already in operation.

Your Help

You can help. Please send us:

1. Names and addresses of persons who should receive this service: teachers and leaders, program planners and agency administrators, policy makers and others outside the schools who are actively engaged in any type of beginning or remedial reading programs for *adults* or *out-of-school youth.*
2. Materials or reports describing your own program or work in this area.

Literacy Volunteers

Attached is an introduction to the work of Literacy Volunteers, Inc., first in a series on major partners in the national Right to Read effort.

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NATIONAL RIGHT TO READ PARTNERS --- LITERACY VOLUNTEERS, INC.

Voluntary Tutors for Adult Non-Readers

Literacy Volunteers, Inc. (LitVol) organizes and trains volunteers to teach reading on a one-to-one tutoring basis to functionally illiterate adults (those with less than fifth grade skills). Some 1,300 trained volunteers are at work with about 1,500 learners in 32 affiliates coordinated through LitVol's national headquarters in Syracuse, N.Y. Founded in 1962 by Ms. Ruth Colvin (still an active leader), Literacy Volunteers is expanding, under the leadership of its executive director, Joseph Gray, and with financial assistance from the U.S. Office of Education into three new cities (Hartford, Conn., New York City and Worcester, Mass.).

Working at the O-5 level, where there are so many adult non-readers and so very few remedial programs, LitVol in its years of successful work has developed more methods and procedures than we can cover in this brief introduction. Among them are: heavy use of voluntary staff; organized recruitment plans for trainers and learners, aided by TV spots and other publicity materials; tutor training, using handbooks on organizing and instructional techniques, including audio-visual components; methods for "matching" tutors and learners by personality and temperament—which experience has shown to be important; tutor follow-up through newsletters, refresher training and annual conferences; techniques for bringing LitVol learners into school, ABE or manpower training programs when they are ready; tests for placement and assessing achievement; use of various materials; numerous aids and helpful memos for tutors; methods for collaboration with business companies and guidelines for the duties of each; techniques of coordination, making maximum use of voluntary staff.

Individualized Personal Instruction

It is best for voluntary tutors to supplement other programs run by professional teachers; at the O-5 adult literacy level, there do not appear to be many such programs. Therefore, LitVol brings the learner up to grade five through voluntary one-to-one tutoring, and cites the following advantages of this method:

> Illiterate adults have often been frustrated in classrooms and generalize this experience to any group situation.
>
> It is difficult to find a group, or even two adults at the same level who, studying together, can learn at the same pace. The slower get discouraged.

Personal tutoring can fit the instruction to the varying motives of the adult learner.

Personal attention can often buck up the morale of the troubled learner and keep him from stopping effort. Most adults with severe reading problems have assorted other personal problems as well.

Placement and Evaluation

LitVol finds that grade completed means practically nothing with adults; therefore, all are tested for correct placement. Annual followup tests measure progress on: Graded Word List (out of context); Word Recognition (in context); Comprehension; Diagnosis (word attack skills). It is apparent that some learners simply do not improve; most (roughly 70%) improve one grade or more per year; some advance in spectacular manner. About 20% go on to ABE or other training.

Volunteer Training Crucial

According to LitVol, good teacher training is crucial to success, and their program includes these among other features:

Interviews to orient prospective LitVol tutors and screening to determine their motivation, commitment and suitability for the work.

Eighteen hour pre-service training workshop, use of handbooks, slide-tape training modules, demonstration, practice on fellow tutors and, finally, actual practice with learners.

Substantive elements: how to test, specific teaching techniques (Experience Story approach, sight words, phonetics, lesson planning, etc.) and how to tailor methods to the learner at hand.

Sensitivity training for better understanding of learner's needs.

Orientation to LitVol procedures.

How to get help from the local community.

Matching of trained tutor to suitable learner.

Followup supervision and retraining.

Hiring of a black paraprofessional to recruit volunteer teachers from the inner city has proven to be successful.

Coordinators and Leaders

Each LitVol affiliate sends two persons for leader training, which is similar to, but more extensive than, tutor training. Assisted by a paid coordinator these volunteers return to train tutors in the local area. Periodically, the trainers are brought together for refresher seminars.

Despite the extensive use of volunteers in teaching, training, organizational and even office work, a small core of dedicated, full-time, paid coordinators are required to hold the organizational effort together and keep all elements moving forward.

Business Cooperation and Other Innovations

In cooperation with a Syracuse foundry, LitVol has successfully developed a small-scale model for working with industrial workers needing reading help. Often on-the-job occupational and skill training programs are poorly equipped to cope with elementary reading problems. A tactful liaison person in the foundry, working with a LitVol volunteer, has been able to guide workers to the voluntary tutor program.

LitVol has initiated other interesting projects, some of them only in the idea stage: experimentation with auto-tutorial forms of teacher training; many kinds of cooperation with local community agencies, including a Boys Club as "sponsor" of an affiliate; initiation of efforts to work in a large urban area; college credit for LitVol work in cooperation with an experimental program for black students in a local college.

Publications and Further Information

LitVol has in final stages of preparation (ready by summer) an adult reading test, a tutor handbook and a leader training handbook. In addition, they publish brochures and publicity materials; booklists and other helpful materials for their turors; a newsletter, and brief mimeographed descriptions of various parts of the program. These may be obtained, as available and as time of a small staff permits, from:

Joseph Gray
Literacy Volunteers, Inc.
222 West Onodaga Street
Syracuse, N.Y. 13202
Telephone: (315) 478-2171

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on Adult Education